

1. In the election of 1952, Dwight Eisenhower was elected president by a landslide margin. He had been an Allied commander in Europe during WWII and had campaigned on the promise of Peace, Progress and Prosperity.
2. Affluence = a large amount of wealth. This was evident in the 1950s by the fact that the average American family made approximately 15 times the annual income than those in Europe.
3. The rising income and easy credit in the 1950s contributed to a culture of Consumerism where Americans bought all the luxuries they could never before have afforded and were never available in the past.
4. A new business model developed in the 1950s. A Franchise gave business owners the right to operate a business, carry the company's name and sell the company's products. The earliest success story in the US in the 1950s is McDonalds.
5. During the 1950s, the number of factory workers, known as Blue Collar workers, declined as more workers became professionals such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and managers. These professional workers are known as White Collar workers. The GI Bill had helped returning soldiers gain an education and skills to make this shift.
6. As the American soldiers returned from Europe, they married and began having children. This resulted in a Baby Boom, a large increase in births in proportion to the size of the population.
7. After the war, women who had worked in factories were encouraged to leave those jobs and take their place at Home while their husbands were the breadwinners.
8. Many families also moved to the Suburbs, communities that developed on the outskirts of major cities. These were often planned communities such as Levittown, where thousands of identical houses could be found.
9. Most people who moved to the suburbs were White middle class. African Americans were often denied the right to purchase homes in these areas – an example of post-war discrimination. This was in spite of the US Supreme Court case of Brown v Board of Education that said separate but equal was NOT acceptable.
10. Contrary to the war years, many Americans now moved South, where the climate was more inviting.
11. In 1956, Congress passed a bill creating the Interstate Highway Act, which linked the 9 million square miles of the United States with a series of paved roads. This was something President Eisenhower considered one of his major accomplishments.
12. Americans also purchased Automobiles, which often became a status symbol.
13. Advances in medicine, including a vaccine by Jonas Salk for Polio, and surgical procedures to transplant organs Increased the life expectancy in the United States. The average life expectancy in the 1950s was 68 years, and 70 by the late 1960s.
14. By the late 1950s, the computer had been developed. It would evolve into one of the greatest technological advances of our time.